May 17, 2006

Oral History of Margaret Roberts
CD # 399

Interviewed by Elaine Carr

Elaine: I'm at Margaret Roberts home in Maeser at 903 North 3000 West, which is called the half mile lane. Margaret can you tell me who your parents and brothers and sisters are, and where you were born?

Margaret: My fathers name was William Wallace Oaks. He was born in Wasatch County and moved out to Vernal when he was about four years old with his parents. My mothers name was Caroline Price. She was born here in Vernal. Her fathers name was Samuel Daniel Price and her mothers name was Margaret Ann Hall. They lived up on a ranch. He was an excellent farmer. My fathers parents lived down on 2500 West between 4th and 5th South. They were farmers too, and they were excellent farmers. They were good friends, and we spent our holidays together when I was growing up.
My oldest brothers name was Clyde Wallace Oaks. My older sister was Lorna Oaks. I was the middle child and then my younger brother Jessup Watson Oaks, and my younger sister Oreta. That was our family.

Elaine: Where was the home you grew up in? Is this the home that you lived in?

Margaret: No, we lived over on the main highway.

Elaine: On the Maeser Highway?

Margaret: Yes, where the big yellow house is now. That was my parents home. The house has been remodeled of course; but that was the area where I was born. My mothers doctor was Dr. Rich who practiced here in Vernal. I was born the 3rd of November 1917. I grew up there, spent most of my life there.

Elaine: Can you tell me about going to school in Maeser and who your teachers were?

Margaret: Of course my birthday being in November, I wasn't six years old when September came so I didn't start school. But in January the following year, why I started school and then they closed the schools because of measles and mumps epidemics. Then I went in April, and then I was promoted to the second grade. My mother had been a school teacher in her earlier years, and so she did a lot of helping me at home. I went through the elementary years at Maeser School. My first grade teacher was Nellie Hacking Allen. She was a very sweet lady and a good teacher. I remember Orfa Johnson was my second and fourth grade teacher I think. Don L. McConkie taught me in the seventh grade. Karl B. Preece was the eighth grade teacher. He was the principal of that school through those years.
It was an interesting time. I played softball and I played volleyball. That was the main sports that

I did through the years.
Elaine: Can you tell me about learning the piano?

Margaret: When I was about seven years old, a little lady by the name of Mrs. Moss came by and she was looking for piano students. So, my mother had her come once a week through the summer time and teach me piano lessons. She was a nice, sweet, kind little lady. And then later on I took lessons from Ruth Ryrie, she was a professional pianist from Ogden. Then, when I started High School, Lloyd Winn was the music director. He took me in for his pianist for the orchestra. I played for the orchestra the next three years. The year I was a senior, I decided I didn't want to do that anymore, and he was a little upset with me but I didn't play the year I was a senior.

Elaine: I bet you still play beautifully.

Margaret: I've spent most of my life on the piano bench. That's where Emily and Ellen Searle, they were pretty girls, and they used to sing duets, and I played for them most of their high school years.

Elaine: I think they still do. Did you have any pets or livestock on the farm?

Margaret: We lived on the farm. We usually had fourteen to sixteen cows. My brother, my mother and my older sister milked the cows. I used to go help with the feeding of the hay, but I never did milk cows. But, I'd go out after they were through with the chores and bring in the milk to be separated. I'd help with separating and then I would go help feed the cattle after they were through milking. So I did that in the winter time, because in the summer time we usually pastured our animals in the field. So those were the main chores we did. Of course my sister and I always took turns doing the dishes. One time she'd do the dish washing and then I'd dry them and visa versa. So we got along well that way.
My oldest brother went on a mission when he was eighteen years old. He went to Louisville Kentucky on his mission and he spent two and a half years in the mission field. That's why my oldest sister had to learn to milk. But I never did have the touch to milk cows very well.

Elaine: What kinds of food did you like eating when growing up on the farm?

Margaret: Well, we had no choice. We ate what we grew. We did a lot of canning in the summer. We had our fruit and our vegetables. In the winter time we'd usually kill a beef or a pork and have our own meat. We would have the pork salted and preserved. We didn't always eat roasts and so forth. But it was things that we grew on our farm ourselves.

Elaine: Did you have any favorite hobbies to do in your spare time?

Margaret: I did a lot of embroidery work. I still have some of the pieces that I did when I was in my early teen years. I never did learn to crochet a lot. I crocheted edges on my babies blankets but other than that I didn't do the fancy crochet work that some people do. We used to dance. We used to have parties in the winter time. A group of our friends in this Maeser area would get

together and have candy pulls and we'd have popcorn parties and so forth. So, we had a good social group. The boys and the girls that I grew up with here in Maeser, they've always been friends with each other and it's lasted through the years. Most of them have passed away now. But, there's still three of the original friends which is David Hall, Merrill Anderson, and I can't remember the third one. But anyway they're still alive and I'm about the last one of the girls that are still alive.

Elaine: Is there any special ways that you celebrated holidays when you were young?

Margaret: Well, when we celebrated holidays, we would either go to my grandparents place or to my aunts which lived about a quarter of a mile from our place. At Thanksgiving we were at one house and at Christmas time we were either up to Grandmother Price's place or my Grandma Oak's house. And they used to play cards; that was their entertainment. I never did learn to play cards. I never did like to play cards very well. But, my parents used to play cards on those evenings, but that was about the only time. It was just the way they had entertaining each other. The younger ones would get together and make honey candy or have candy pulls or popcorn popping. It was just a social get together.

Elaine: We're doing an article on Mrs. Sarah Rudge, and Ellen told me that I should ask you what you remember about her.

Margaret: She owned the store down here where the Maeser corner is, 2500 West. Of course she had a pretty store. They were from England, and she had a parrot. The parrot would always talk to us. But, she also had a little lawn area next to the main street. She grew lots of pretty flowers and lots of pretty things. And, yes she would visit with us. If we had a nickel or a dime or a couple of eggs or something we'd go to the store and get us three or four pieces of candy. Yes, I remember Sarah Rudge very much.

Elaine: Where did you go to high school?

Margaret: At the Uintah High School?

Elaine: Where the swimming pool is now?

Margaret: Yes.

Elaine: Do you remember your high school teachers?

Margaret: Yes, I remember. Of course, Lloyd Winn was the music teacher. My English teacher was Ruth Hart and Gwen Hansen. Then Mr. Lundell was a Horticulture teacher and I took Biology and the science classes from him. He was a very special person. Don McConkie taught high school two years when I was there. Mr. Anthon S. Cannon was our Seminary teacher. I took Seminary for three years. Well, I took it two years, because I took two classes the year I was a Junior, so I graduated from Seminary in two years, rather than three. Reed Morrill was our History teacher. He was a good teacher, but nobody liked History very well.

Elaine: Until you're older, then all of a sudden you like it. What are some memories of down town Vernal?

Margaret: Well, I do remember we used to do a lot of dancing. That was our most important entertainment because there on the corner of Vernal Avenue and 100 South was the Imperial Hall. It was one of the best dance halls west of the Mississippi River. It had the springs under the floor and it was a beautiful hall. I was so sad and upset when they tore that down, because it should have been kept and up kept. Too many people kind of went away from doing so much dancing. So, they let it deteriorate. But I've always felt bad to think that we still didn't have that dance hall, because we had local orchestras which were Don Hacking and the Stringhams and so forth that had a dance band. Neva Allen Hemstreet was the pianist and they did beautiful music, and they had good dances. And, we used to love to dance. And of course they'd have a dance not only on Friday or Saturday night, but they usually had one during the week. It was something to entertain ourselves. We did have the Vogue Theater in town. About the only thing I can remember of going to a movie was when I was eight or nine years old, the show of King of Kings. And, that's the story of Jesus Christ. That's the movie I remember the most, except Girl of the Limberlost. That's about the only two movies that I ever remember going to.
So we never did go to the movies much, we spent our time just associating as friends and so forth.

Elaine: Did you start dating in high school?

Margaret: Yes

Elaine: What was courtship like then? It was probably different then, than it is now.

Margaret: The first date I had was our Halloween party when I was in the eighth grade. My boyfriend came on a horse. So I rode a horse with him to the dance here at our local ward hall. Most of the time, my boyfriend that I went with mostly in high school, he had one of these Plymouth Coups, a two seated automobile that his folks owned. So, I went with him quite a bit in high school, but I never did date steady. We used to go to all the sleigh riding parties. We'd get the big bob sled. And the whole bunch of us would go on sleigh rides and have just a lot of fun. That's when we'd end up having candy pulls or just some kind of a social get together.

Elaine: Sounds like it was a fun time.

Margaret: Yes, it was. When you have a group of friends that you grow up with like that and you can get together so many times and have so many interesting things to do. One time I remember we went in the bob sled, and Eula Hall and I were the teamsters. We did it on purpose, but any way it was a little upsetting to the fellows, because we drove down over a bank and tipped the sleigh over. So, they had to spend time getting things set up again. We did pranks and so forth and things.

Elaine: Did you go on to school after high school or did you work?

Margaret: No. I joined the uinversity of hard knocks. I worked for a telephone company for three or four years and then I got married.

Elaine: The telephone company there on Vernal Avenue?

Margaret: Yes.

Elaine: Can you tell us about working there.

Margaret: That was interesting. The manager at that time was Paul Cowan. He was a good manager. He'd sit and listen as we did our work and then he would kid with us along the way. There was one spell that I worked nights, which I had to go to work at 11:00 at night and work until seven in the morning. And of course it wasn't as busy then, especially through the nights. But, I had to be on the job so when ever the calls came in I was alert. So when I came home at 7:00 in the morning, I would usually go to bed until about 11:00, so I never did get a full night sleep. But, it was interesting, to think at that time when you could make a call from one Continent to another. It was rather interesting. But, I did work for the telephone company for about six years.
And then I got married and had my first baby, and then I went back and substituted at the telephone company during the summer time, while the other girls took their vacations. Delores Anderson was the supervisor when I worked there. So it was an interesting time and then to see the way things have grown through the years and doubled and tripled in capacity, why it's interesting.

Elaine: Can you tell me a little about the circumstances surrounding your marriage and who you married?

Margaret: Well, can you imagine marrying a man without any money? Well, that's what I did. But he was a worker. We lived in what was called camp cabins the first winter in Roosevelt. I married David Christian Roberts on the 30th day of may of 1935. The following year, we had a baby boy. But he could do most any kind of work there was. He wasn't lazy. We had our struggles because there wasn't a lot of money then.

Elaine: I don't think there was a lot of money for anybody. To me that's a better life than the way things are now. A simpler life, a better life.

Margaret: Well, that's right. Well, we were happy. Once in awhile he would stay with the baby and let me go to a movie or something just to give us a break, if we had thirty five or fifty cents or something like that. But, we were down to earth people. We didn't exaggerate, we didn't elaborate on a lot of things, we just did what we could and that was it.
And of course he got a job the following summer after our baby was nine months old. We went to California. It was about three weeks, he had applied at McDonald Douglas and the different aircraft companies. Just about the time we were out of money, he got a job. So he went to work at McDonald Douglas. He worked there for four years.

Our second child David was born in Santa Monica California. We didn't rent an apartment; we rented a house up in the Pacific Palisades, which is the hills southwest of Santa Monica from a little old lady. I loved that house. I wished a lot of times we'd bought it. Of course, we weren't in the buying mood there. But we lived there about three years. Then we decided to come back to Utah. But, it was interesting, I used to take my little boy, and we'd ride the bus down to the end of Chitaugue Blvd and change buses and ride another mile over to the chapel to go to church. He (son) was always very attractive to people when they would come by at the bus stop. And, they would always give him a quarter, or give him something, because he always was a handsome, nice, clean little boy. So they liked to shower him with nickel or dimes or something.

Elaine: And then you moved back to Maeser?

Margaret: Yes, we rented a house over on 2500 West. We lived there until my father gave us two acres of ground. And, we built our house. We built our basement, we lived here in the basement for seven years. And then, Dave took our two oldest boys with him, and Merle Allen and George Calder, and they went up on Dry Fork Mountain to cut the trees down to build this house. So, it's built out of logs. When I was in the hospital with my number five son, why, I drew the plans for this house. So they built the house. The only thing different about this house from it's origination, I had a big north window here which I had planned to make a fireplace. when we moved to California the second time, why we sold this house to Jan and Keith Campbell. They put the fireplace in. And that fireplace is built from the brick from the old high school.

Elaine: So, you've lived in this home a lot of years.

Margaret: Yep, I sure have. And when I decided to move back from California, I talked to Jan and she said, "Well if we can find another house in the Maeser area, why, we'll sell this house back to you." So, that's what happened.

Elaine: How many children do you have?

Margaret: I have eight.

Elaine: You have eight children.

Margaret: Six boys and two girls. Wonderful, wonderful kids, not perfect, but they're good kids. My oldest son is sixty-six years old. He calls me every Sunday night. My two youngest children went on missions. Rochelle went to the Canada Halifax Mission. LeGrande went to South America for two and a half years. I have seventeen grandchildren, and twenty eight great grandchildren.

Elaine: I think I remember LeGrande. I think he's my age in school.

Margaret: He's an attorney. He lives there in Orange California. I talked to him last night. He has two wonderful children. His oldest daughter has a scholarship to come to BYU. She'll start up here after she graduates from high school. Why she'll be in Provo. His younger son is a teenager,

and it's a struggle, but he's going to be alright.

Elaine: Teenage years are way harder than when I was a kid.

Margaret: And harder for kids in California.

Carman has three wonderful children, which he and his wife are in Hawaii this week, because they have a son that's stationed in Hawaii in the coastguard. He's just a wonderful young man. Anthony had two children and they're married. He's had trouble with his oldest son, but he's working his way out of a lot of trouble he was having.
David had married a girl with two boys, and he adopted them and they had two girls. And they're a wonderful family.

Elaine: Well, it sounds like you're a proud grandmother.

Margaret: I am. Rochelle has lived in California, and she's lived in Fallon Nevada and now they've bought themselves a home in Farwest Utah. That's up north of Ogden. She has two wonderful young men. And she married a fellow that had been married before, and he had three or four children. So now they all live up in the Ogden area where they can be more of a family togetherness.
Carol Ann lives here in Vernal. She has one daughter that lives with her and her other daughter lives in Alaska.
So I love my family. Like I said, not perfect, but we're good honest people.

Elaine: None of us are perfect, we just have to try our hardest.

Margaret: That's right, we sure do.
I served a mission for the church in 1984 to 1985. I served in the Tennessee Nashville Mission. The mission was a tracting mission. I loved it; it was a special experience. It was a learning experience. There was a special couple that I met and taught the gospel to. The man was Portugese/Chinese. His wife was Caucasian. They were special people. We still stay in contact with each other. The Gospel is so wonderful

Elaine: What are some of your very most fondest memories, thinking back over your life, what is your fondest memories?

Margaret: You know the years I was in the Mutual Organization, during those years, the special events that we would have when we would have a special dinner. We would invite the Young Men. We were taught manners, we were taught how to dress, and we were taught the things that make us refined. I think this is what they need more of today. Because, I do think we need a lot more refinement than these young people have to profess up to. I think we need to refine our lives, we need to be a lot more compassionate. We need to be a lot more considerate of one another.

Elaine: That sure is true. Life is sure different that way than when even when I was growing up.

Is there any advice that you are known for giving or any special phrases that is you.

Margaret: Every day, do your and you will improve!

Elaine: Do you remember any community or church events that were special.

Margaret: I used to like the fourth or twenty-fourth of July celebrations, because we always had a good baseball game or something to go to in the afternoon. Of course, it brought communities together. Especially, when I was a girl, my father was a baseball player, and so was both my uncles. My father was the pitch. My uncle Ed played first base and my uncle Lindsey played third base on the Vernal team. They would play the baseball against the Indians or the Roosevelt area. Those times were very, very special because we always look forward tol
They had the CC camps up in Bullionville, I don't know what it's called now. We'd go up there, we young people would pile in a truck and go up to watch these baseball games. So games and associations I think was the most important entertainment when I was young. I never remember of having any fights over who won or didn't win. I know when Anthony and our boys were going to high school, they played on the basketball teams. They played on the baseball teams and they played football. It seems like sports and things are the best way to keep people in line. To help people enjoy themselves.

Elaine: Do you remember any big issues in Vernal about growth, or community problems and how they were resolved or any other things about down town Vernal?

Margaret: I know they had their town meetings. When they laid the first pavement through Vernal, my dad was working for the State Road Commission at the time. He was the one who ran the roller that rolled the asphalt. What a thrill that was to have a nice paved street on Main Street. Other than that, I don't know. I never have been involved in the civic responsibilities enough to pay that much attention.

Elaine: Is there any last memories or experiences that you want to share?

Margaret: I think the more that we can teach and we can exemplify before these young people, our example of what it means to be the very best we can. There's a lot of brilliant young people any more. They just need to be shown the way, to exemplify this in their lives so that they will be the best they can. I couldn't give any advice to anybody, only just to be the best we can.

Elaine: Well, you're a good example of it.

Margaret: Well, I don't know, but I think it's necessary, because there is so much good in the world we need to eliminate all the bad. I think the fondest memories of my life are the things that made me feel good about myself, that made feel like maybe I could do better than I'm doing today. I'm proud of my heritage and I'm proud of my family. I just look forward to improving.

Elaine: Well, you're a very special woman and you're a good example to follow for youth and adults.